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IMPLEMENTATION OF FOREST-RELATED DECISIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS, INCLUDING AN EXAMINATION OF SECTORAL AND CROSS-SECTORAL LINKAGES

Programme Element I.1: Progress in national forest and land-use plans

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

An analysis of the approaches used by countries in different regions to programme and implement the conservation, management and sustainable development of all types of forests shows that significant progress has been made in both developed and developing countries in adopting new policies and strategies and in preparing plans and programmes of action. However, the concrete application of those policies, strategies, plans and programmes is facing a series of obstacles which need to be overcome. The obstacles appear at both national and global levels and can be grouped into four categories: Policy and institutional reforms, Investment programming and funding, Capacity-building, and International cooperation.

At the national level, actions to be considered to overcome these obstacles depend on the political, social and economic situation of each country. However, some key actions should be considered by all countries, such as decentralization of operational planning and implementation; establishment of intersectoral coordination and consultation; true involvement of interested parties at all levels, in particular indigenous people, local communities and women; redefinition of the role of the public sector and private institutions; development of incentive systems; provision of access to

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training and education opportunities for all actors; establishment of a strong national leadership for donor coordination, when necessary; and simplification of administrative procedures and bureaucracy.

At the global level, actions to be considered for supporting the efforts of countries include harmonization of international agreements; enhancement of cooperation between international institutions; mobilization, reinforcement and better utilization of international assistance and private-sector financing; establishment of innovative partnership mechanisms; and respect for national leadership.

The document proposes that, in order to advance the agenda on this programme element, the Panel endorse the concept and basic principles of national forest programmes. The Panel may also wish to consider the following four themes for addressing obstacles to the implementation of national forest programmes: sectoral planning, policies and institutions; investment programming; national capacity-building; and international cooperation.

Finally, the necessity of a global consensus for the promotion, improvement and support of national forest programmes is stressed, and it is suggested that the Panel consider institutional options for reinforcing the efficiency of international cooperation and collaboration.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The present document reports on the implementation of decisions of the Commission on Sustainable Development relating to programme element I.1 of the work programme of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF), Implementation of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development decisions related to forests at the national and international levels, including an examination of sectoral and cross-sectoral linkages. It reports on progress being made through national forests and land-use plans and programmes, taking into account discussions held in previous sessions of IPF and other relevant national, regional and international forums.

2. The work under this programme element is guided by chapter 11 of Agenda 21, 1/ the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statements of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests (Forest Principles), 2/ and the decisions taken by the Commission on Sustainable Development 3/ at its third session and further elaborated by IPF at its first and second sessions (E/CN.17/IPF/1995/3 and E/CN.17/IPF/1996/24).

3. The Commission defined programme element I.1 as a need to consider "actions to promote progress through national forests and land-use plans and programmes in implementing the Forest Principles, and chapter 11 and other chapters related to forests in Agenda 21, through an open, transparent and participatory process involving Governments and all interested parties, including major groups, particularly indigenous people and local communities". 4/

4. Subsequently the Panel, at its first session, emphasized that the preparatory work should be "based on the provisions of the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests, and would benefit from consideration of regional initiatives and regional dimensions. The preparatory work should include the preparation of a report on all types of forests, presenting an overview of current approaches to national strategies, including links between national forest plans and sustainable development strategies/plans, and land-use plans, including ecosystem management aspects, and sectoral plans; and a synthesis of lessons learned, including lessons learned from participatory forest management approaches at the national and field levels. The preparatory work should also include a report on an assessment of progress made in implementing national forest and integrated land-use plans and should identify gaps in need of further attention. It should also focus on improved cooperation and implementation by national Governments of bilateral and multilateral forest-related planning activities and programmes, and the use of national-level participatory approaches to that end." 5/ The Panel also decided to schedule programme element I.1 for initial discussion at its second session (Geneva, 11-22 March 1996), and for substantive discussion at its third session (Geneva, 9-20 September 1996).

5. The present report was prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), as lead agency for programme element I.1, in consultation with the secretariat of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on

Forests in the Division of Sustainable Development of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat. It also benefited from the Expert Meeting on Financial Mechanisms and Sources of Finance for Sustainable Forestry (Pretoria, 4-7 June 1996), co-sponsored by Denmark, South Africa and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and attended by 29 developing and 11 developed countries; the Expert Consultation on Implementing the Forest Principles: Promotion of National Forest and Land-use Programmes (Feldafing, Germany, 16-21 June 1996), sponsored by Germany and attended by experts from 31 developing and 36 developed countries; and the FAO regional forestry commissions and the Forest Advisors Group (FAG). It takes into consideration paragraph 13 of the statement on biological diversity and forests from the Convention on Biological Diversity to the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (UNEP/CBD/COP/2/19).

6. Subsequent IPF deliberations on this topic will benefit from the outcome of an expert meeting on sustainable forestry and land use, co-sponsored by Sweden and Uganda and to be held in Stockholm in October 1996; and a seminar on the implementation of sustainable forest management at the regional and local levels, co-sponsored by Japan, Canada and FAO, to be held in Tokyo in November 1996.

7. The present document builds upon the Secretary-General's report to IPF at its second session (E/CN.17/IPF/1996/8) and the outcome of its discussions at that session (E/CN.17/1996/24) and, based on the Panel's observations and on a broader situation analysis of ongoing planning frameworks adopted in the different regions, presents more consolidated proposals on basic principles of national forest programmes applicable to all types of forests for the Panel's consideration.

I. OUTCOME OF DISCUSSIONS HELD BY THE PANEL AT ITS SECOND SESSION

8. During deliberations at its second session, the Panel considered national forest programmes as the main tool for planning and implementing forest-related activities and noted that considerable efforts had been directed towards planning and policy reforms in all regions, particularly in developing countries. The quantity and quality of national, regional and international initiatives relating to forests were viewed as testimony of Governments' commitment to the conservation, management and sustainable development of forests.

9. While acknowledging the difficulties faced by many developing countries in their efforts to comply with the demands of the several internationally recognized sectoral planning frameworks directly or indirectly relating to forests, the Panel stressed the importance of "planning" for addressing the complex issue of the sustainability of forest resources.

10. The term "national forest programme" was understood to be a generic expression for a wide range of approaches to the process of planning, programming and implementing forest activities in countries, comprising both the planning of forest-sector activities, including the formulation of policies,

strategies and action plans, and their implementation, including monitoring and evaluation.

11. It was also recognized that there was need for a more participatory, integrated and cross-sectoral approach to forest planning and implementation, taking into account the needs and requirements of all interested parties and the policies and actions being promoted by other sectors, particularly those relating to often conflicting alternative land use.

12. Special emphasis was given to the fact that national Governments should decide on the most appropriate planning framework for addressing sustainable forest management and development. That approach was more likely to result in a stronger sense of ownership and political commitment by Governments and all participating partners.

13. The Panel recognized the importance of international cooperation for the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests, particularly in developing countries, in spite of the fact that it was each country's responsibility to develop policies that would create an enabling environment for private, bilateral and multilateral investments in the forest sector.

II. WORKING DEFINITIONS

14. As requested by the Panel at its second session, the terminology used in the present document has been analysed and modified so as to be consistent with that used in the Forest Principles 2/ and in chapter 11 of Agenda 21. 1/ It covers all forest types and utilization patterns in developing countries, developed countries and countries with economies in transition.

A. Forests and forest lands

15. Forests - whether natural, modified, or planted - are biotic communities characterized by a predominance of woody vegetation. They are found in all climatic zones (boreal, temperate, tropical and mountainous) and may take the form of closed canopy forests or of open canopy woodlands. They comprise all the components of the forest ecosystems and their natural resources.

16. Forest lands may be covered by forests or degraded - that is devoid of trees or not maintained in a sustainable manner.

17. Forests and forest lands should be viewed as one part of a complex variety of land uses, together with their human and societal relationships, and not as an independent biophysical entity.

B. Forest sector

18. The term "forest sector" refers to all the biological, ecological, social, economical, cultural and religious dimensions of trees and forests. It includes not only the components of the forest ecosystems - either natural or artificial,

including single trees or rows of trees in rural areas - but also the human activities relating to the existence and utilization of those ecosystems and trees and the human beings, actors and/or beneficiaries of those activities, particularly those who live in and around the forests.

C. Planning, strategy, policy

19. These three terms refer to long-term processes. Planning is the systematic process of examining the future and defining policies, strategies and actions to achieve goals. A strategy is a broad course of action, chosen from among alternatives to attempt to achieve clearly defined goals. A policy is a course of action adopted and pursued by a Government, political party, community or the private sector, according to desired social and economic objectives.

1. Strategic forest-sector planning

20. Strategic forest, or forest-sector, planning is a continuous process of taking decisions and actions about alternative ways of conserving and using trees and forests, with the intent of achieving specific goals in the medium and long term. It is a way to visualize and define actions to expand the flow of social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits from trees, forests and wooded lands. It is a complex and dynamic iterative process of proposing, testing, evaluating and learning. It can be viewed as a regulatory structure effecting changes in a desired direction, considered as progress. The Forest Principles represent an internationally accepted set of guidelines for recommended changes.

21. A forest, or forest-sector, plan is the main result of the forest-sector planning process. Forest-sector plans are usually prepared for an entire country and are therefore referred to as national forest plans. Countries also devise forest-sector plans at the subnational level (state, province, region) and even at the local level (district, commune, village). A plan can exist on one of three levels:

(a) A normative level, linked to the goal or mission. A plan prepared only at this level is often referred to as a policy;

(b) A strategic level, action-oriented and meant to provoke change. A plan at this level is often referred to as a strategy;

(c) An operational level, which entails programming or actions required to implement the strategy. This level is referred to as a plan, or programme, of action.

2. Operational planning

22. Operational planning is a process of decision-making (and action) concerned with the programming in time and space of a series of activities, with a view to addressing a specific issue or set of issues or solving problems. Whereas

strategic planning is mainly concerned with policy directions, operational planning is about the details of implementation. It is usually short-term, as opposed to strategic planning, which is medium-to-long term.

3. Decentralized planning

23. Decentralized planning is a process of empowering subnational and local-level authorities/institutions in the decision-making and implementation processes. It involves both a greater level of autonomy and strong interdependent links with other institutions of the same level and with central-level institutions. Two main virtues of decentralized planning are that it empowers subnational institutions with their own improvement goals and it allows them to take advantage of their special priorities, capabilities and forest conditions.

4. Participatory planning

24. Through participatory planning, all concerned actors will be invited to participate in the decision-making process and in the implementation of the actions jointly decided upon. The actors will normally include different governmental sectors, particularly those that are closely related to the forest sector, governmental institutions at the subnational and local levels, the private sector, community-based organizations and non-governmental organizations.

D. National forest programmes

25. The term "national forest programme" is understood to be a generic expression for a wide range of approaches to the process of planning, programming and implementing forest activities in countries. National forest programmes comprise both the planning of forest-sector activities, including the formulation of policies, strategies and action plans, and their implementation, including monitoring and evaluation.

26. In many countries, the words "programme" and "plan" are used interchangeably, and "strategy", "forest strategy" or "national strategy" may be used to designate a process similar to that of national forest programmes. In the present report, the expression "national forest programme" is used to designate the process used by a country to deal with forest issues, including the planning and implementation of forest and forest-related activities. The expression "national forest plan" refers to the results of the planning process.

27. The purpose of national forest programmes is to establish a workable social and political framework for forest conservation, management and sustainable development. National forest programmes are part of a political process in the sense that orientations and decisions are the outcome of debates, negotiations, controversies and compromises on the part of all interested actors, often with different opinions on what should be the appropriate policy and course of action. It is important to make a clear distinction between national forest

programmes as part of a process and some of the results of the process, which are specific policy statements, strategies, or programmes (or plans) of action.

E. Forest and land uses

1. Integrated land management

28. Integrated land management is a logical sequence of procedures that identify needs in terms of human and environmental requirements, develop possible land-use options and suggest the combination of options that would optimize achievement of those requirements on a sustainable and long-term basis. It is the subject of chapter 10 of Agenda 21. 2/

2. Land-use planning

29. Land-use planning deals with the nature and the value of land and how they determine its sustainability for different purposes. Land-use planning takes place at different levels and scales, from global to local. It stipulates the advantages and disadvantages of imposing a specific use on a particular unit of land, based upon physical, economic and social criteria. Land-use planning is a tool for integrated land management. It recognizes the multiple uses of a given landscape and the close interface between forests and other sectors - for example, agriculture.

3. National forest and land-use plans

30. The phrase "national forest and land-use plans" was chosen by the Commission in reference to chapter 11 of Agenda 21, which requests Governments "to prepare and implement, as appropriate, national forestry action programmes and/or plans for the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests" which "should be integrated with other land uses". 6/ In addition, Governments should review and, if necessary, revise "measures and programmes relevant to all types of forests and vegetation, inclusive of other related lands and forest-based resources", relate them to other land uses and development policies and legislation, and promote "adequate legislation and other measures as a basis against uncontrolled conversion (of forests) to other types of land uses". 7/ This term recognizes that forests have a cross-sectoral dimension and that planning for forest land cannot be undertaken effectively without consideration of competitive uses.

31. The generic expression "national forest programmes" includes reference to land-use planning and integrated land management. Therefore, it is suggested that the Panel use "national forest programmes" instead of "national forest and land-use plans".

32. At the local level (village or community level, district level), sustainable development entails many aims and objectives, such as eliminating poverty and raising living standards, increasing food production, improving the quality of human settlements, halting the spread of desertification, preventing

deforestation, preserving biodiversity and managing existing forests. Each gives rise to different and often competing programmes, with different objectives, institutional responsibilities and budgets and vested interests at the national and international levels. Therefore at the local level, a national forest programme must be considered a component of an integrated development programme; at the national level, a national forest programme must be considered an integral component of the national sustainable development strategy/plan.

III. FUTURE CHALLENGES

33. The success of a national forest programme depends on the given country's capacity to overcome a series of obstacles, which can be grouped into the four categories discussed below.

A. Policy and institutional reforms

34. Countries should be able to identify and correct policies that have negative effects on the sustainability of forests. Such policies are often external to the forest sector and are mostly related to:

(a) Inappropriate taxes, subsidies and pricing practices for alternative land-use activities which result in harmful externalities such as deforestation and/or loss of biodiversity;

(b) The land tenure system, physical infrastructure and/or other factors that can affect investments in the forest sector;

(c) Undervaluation of forests, cost internalization and the possibility of reinvestment of revenues in forest management.

35. Existing policies should allow for transparency and full participation of all interested parties in both developed and developing countries. This will enable countries better to identify their priorities by properly addressing the question, Trees and forests for whom and for what? through appropriate strategies which enable them to seek the views of all concerned groups and individuals that would otherwise be underrepresented.

36. In many countries, the difficulty encountered lies more in inconsistency or lack of implementation than in the non-existence of good policies. Therefore, the enforcement of legislation and application of policy guidelines through appropriate means are of paramount importance for sustainable forest development.

37. In some circumstances the reorganization of governmental structures is necessary. The reforms should cover a redefinition of roles, functions and human resource needs, among others.

B. Investment programming and funding

1. Decentralized planning and programming

38. Decentralized planning and programming is now generally recognized to be the main approach for promoting sustainable forest management and development at the national level. For its effectiveness, the approach includes:

(a) Use of clearly defined administrative units (e.g., districts, provinces or regions of a country) as the basis for the programme design;

(b) Use of participatory rural appraisal and/or other bottom-up planning tools to define local problems, priorities and opportunities, as experienced by the local people, and drawing upon local knowledge and technologies to identify the most appropriate solutions;

(c) Use of intersectoral need-based interventions. This implies that intersectoral cooperation and coordination are promoted at the local level in all matters related to natural resource management (soil conservation, forestry, agriculture, animal husbandry, etc.);

(d) Designing programmes as demand-driven processes which recognize that local priorities and constraints change. Emphasis is placed on participatory monitoring of the results of actions taken and on making use of, or setting up, local representative structures to discuss and agree on objectives, strategies and actions;

(e) Finding simple and innovative ways to deliver financial incentives or in-kind contributions to individual producers (e.g., through community-based organizations, producers' associations, non-governmental organizations, foundations, local banks), and designing self-financing structures at the national and local levels (e.g., revolving funds).

2. Investment and funding

39. Governments very often implement part of the investment programme through State enterprises and administrations (e.g., forestry education and training, research). Special focus on improving conditions for investments by private enterprises, local communities and individuals is essential. This can be accomplished by removing constraints and disincentives through policy reforms and by introducing appropriate incentives through a decentralized investment programme. The incentive system should reflect the different time perspectives of the individual and the society and the value which is given by the society to the various benefits of forests, and not only the commercial benefits.

40. Incentives can be delivered through either national or local arrangements or a combination of the two, depending on what is feasible in a particular country. To be efficient and effective, the systems must be administratively simple, facilitate coordination of the financial and technical contributions from various sources and ensure that the structures do not absorb a disproportionate share of funds.

41. National funding and external funding should be secured through budgeting and partnership agreements. When many donors are involved, agreements should be collective rather than individual, and legal aspects should be analysed and envisaged. Where conditions permit, donors and financing institutions should participate in the financing of forestry development funds which combine financing from various national and international sources, either at the central or local level. The main implications of this approach for financing agencies would be:

(a) The use of local administrative units as a basis for designing supported programmes;

(b) Flexible programme design where individual programme components (training, funds for local development, contracting, institutional strengthening etc.) can be added and/or removed, based on actual demand;

(c) Increasing reliance on local resources, both material and human, including indigenous people, in programme implementation;

(d) The use of participatory structures for programme management and the definition of transparent mechanisms for the control of funds at local level.

42. The emphasis on decentralized funding structures would contribute to successful implementation.

C. Capacity-building

43. Capacity-building should be based on a clear definition of the roles and mandates of public-sector institutions, the private sector and people's associations. Priority areas of action should be identified for capacity-building and the overall framework for providing assistance established.

44. In addition to traditional capacity-building (e.g. training, education, research, development of management systems), measures should be taken on three key issues:

(a) Establishing the conditions which enable public-sector institutions to achieve and maintain high ethical standards and attract competent individuals (e.g., financial autonomy of forestry institutions, retention of a percentage of stumpage fees, and royalties for salary supplements and other staff incentives);

(b) Developing adequate skills and administrative procedures for managing and supervising the implementation of forest programmes by the private sector and local communities. These skills would include managing funds, conducting competitive bidding, assessing economic and natural resources and monitoring the results of implementation;

(c) Developing information systems (e.g., land-use, forest resource and biodiversity inventories, monitoring trade in forest products, monitoring timber harvesting and revenue collection) to form the basis for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the existing policies and policy instruments.

45. For the private sector, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, whose role is increasing in the implementation of development activities, capacity-building would result in improved technical capacity and mechanisms for their participation and empowerment.

D. International cooperation

46. International cooperation should be considered at the national, regional and international levels. At the country level, the approach should be based on strong national leadership, making use of local organizations, administrative arrangements and human resources in implementing programmes and activities and thus strengthening them.

47. At the regional level, the focus should be on cooperation on common problems or on issues that are transboundary in nature. South/South cooperation, focusing mostly on exchange of information and transfer of technology, could also be very effectively addressed.

48. The international level should be used to harmonize international agreements, frameworks and initiatives that affect the forest sector and better to define the roles of international institutions.

IV. PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

49. Taking into account the understanding that emerged from discussions held on issues relating to programme element I.1 during the second session of the Panel and at national, regional and international meetings after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, including the expert meetings on financial mechanisms and on the Implementation of the Forest Principles (see para. 5), the Panel may wish to consider endorsing the elements of national forest programmes discussed below as applicable to all types of forests.

A. Concept and basic principles of national forest programmes

50. The Panel may wish to consider the adoption of the concept and principles outlined below, as a basis for the subsequent proposals.

1. Concept

51. The definition and the objective of a national forest programme are:

(a) Definition

52. The term "national forest programme" is a generic expression for a wide range of approaches to processes of planning, programming and implementing forest activities at the national and subnational levels.

(b) Objective

53. The goal of a national forest programme is to ensure the conservation, management and sustainable development of forests to meet local, national, regional and global needs and requirements, by fostering national and international partnerships for the benefit of present and future generations.

2. Basic principles

54. The principles of a national forest programme are as follows:

(a) National sovereignty and country leadership

55. National forest programmes are nationally led initiatives, for which the country should assume full leadership and responsibility.

(b) Partnership

56. National forest programmes strive to bring together all interested parties in a process for which they will feel concerned and committed. The strength of the partnership will depend on its ability to draw upon the specific capacities of individual partners.

(c) Participation

57. In a national forest programme, issues, options and the resulting policies, strategies and programmes are agreed upon through participatory decision-making and consensus-building among all interested partners. Transparency and sharing of information are essential for consensus-building.

(d) Holistic and intersectoral approach

58. In national forest programmes, forests should be treated as diverse ecosystems comprising many interdependent elements in dynamic equilibrium, producing a variety of goods and services. Forest dwellers are also a part of the ecosystem. Forestry, including tree-growing in rural areas, is practised within the context of sustainable land management, environmental stability and social and economic development.

(e) Long-term iterative process

59. A national forest programme is a cyclic process comprising planning, implementation, periodic assessment and evaluation. It is also an ongoing process which continuously reflects changes in the planning environment and the acquisition of new knowledge during the course of implementation. Concrete targets and timetables and periodic independent review and reporting are required.

(f) Capacity-building

60. Capacity-building is a fundamental element of a national forest programme. Throughout the process, actions are taken to develop the planning and implementation capacity of the national institutions and other key actors, with a view to decreasing dependence on external assistance.

(g) Policy and institutional reforms

61. A national forest programme ensures that the policy and institutional framework is conducive to sustainable forest development. Programmes must address policy and institutional issues in a comprehensive manner which recognizes the interdependencies and interlinkages among sectors.

(h) Consistency with the national policy framework and global initiatives

62. A national forest programme must be integrated with national sustainable development plans and with regional and local strategies. They should all be integrated in land-use planning at the national and local levels and in programmes that are broader in scope, such as environmental action plans and actions to implement Agenda 21 and related conventions and associated initiatives.

(i) Raising awareness

63. A national forest programme must raise the visibility of the forest sector and its priority in national agendas. The full value of forests, wooded lands and trees and their contribution to social, economic and environmental well-being at the local, national, regional and global levels must be recognized.

(j) National commitment

64. A national forest programme must be backed by a long-term commitment on the part of all national actors (governmental and non-governmental, including community-based institutions and/or organizations within the forest sector and other relevant sectors), particularly at the high political and decision-making levels.

(k) International commitment

65. A national forest programme will prove to be counter-productive if expectations raised during the planning process are not addressed. Long-term commitments from the international community and its institutions, from the planning to the implementation phase, respecting the policies, strategies and programmes approved by countries should be ensured.

B. Planning and implementation

66. Based on an analysis of existing constraints and opportunities and retaining the options that emerged from different forums, the following four

themes capture the essential elements for successful implementation of national forest programmes.

1. Sectoral planning, policies and institutions

67. Sectoral planning, policy revision and institutional reform should be considered periodic processes encompassing various stages. They should be country-driven, based on the sovereign right of each country to use its forest resources in accordance with its own policies and development needs. Comprehensive national forest strategies that are consistent with and integrated into macroeconomic planning and policy and take into account the strategic value of forests as a capital base for national sustainable development need to be developed in order to facilitate mobilizing funds for sustainable forest development from various sources.

(a) Establishment and improvement of strategic forest planning processes

68. Individual countries should establish or improve their strategic planning processes and use them as instruments to guide and orient the process of sectoral development, under strong national leadership. The process should build on national capacity and be based on the following characteristics, considering the situation of each country: well defined linkages to macro-level policies and policy processes; closely linked cross-sectoral policies and issues, particularly land-use policies; high-level political commitment and broad-based support; participatory and decentralized planning approaches, including the use of local knowledge; and identification and management of conflicts between relevant actors.

(b) National development and land-use policy and legislation

69. Countries should take all necessary measures, within the framework of their respective national laws, to ensure that forests are regarded as a national asset by all sectors and that the conservation and wise use of forests is treated as an integral part of development policy planning at all stages and at all levels.

70. Countries should review energy policies, in particular where there is considerable dependence on woodfuel, to ensure that supplies are restored, maintained and/or complemented by policies that promote alternative energy sources.

71. Countries should encourage the optimum use of land resources and take special care to minimize irreversible and unsustainable land-use changes, particularly in natural forest land. This could best be ensured through the harmonization of policies and legislation at all levels, considering issues such as forest ownership, land tenure etc.

72. Countries should review incentives for any activity that affects forests - direct incentives such as tax concessions, credits or grants, or indirect incentives such as provision of infrastructure - and should ensure that future

incentives are carefully designed to achieve sustained production of a range of products and services and their equitable distribution.

(c) Promotion of national forest policy formulation

73. National forest policy formulation should be encouraged and promoted in the context of national policy development. Countries should create and maintain appropriate coordinating mechanisms to review and formulate national policies and ensure that representatives from the whole range of sectors which use, convert or otherwise affect the state of forests take into account the following: an evaluation of all the benefits which forests can provide, the need to maintain biological diversity, and the needs and requirements of forest dwellers and local communities living in and around forests.

74. The regular updating of forest policy should be ensured, taking into account possible changes at the macroeconomic level and in policies in forest-related sectors, involving all interested partners.

(d) Revision of roles, mandates and institutional structures

75. Governments should consider initiating a review and, if needed, redefinition of the roles and mandates of the major forest-related actors, including administrations at the national, provincial and local levels, and the non-governmental sector (non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and the private sector). The review should aim at focusing governmental functions on policy formulation, including legislation; the provision of administrative services; a definition of the roles and mandates of the different institutions at all levels; and supervision and control.

76. Other functions, including productive activities, monitoring and evaluation, technical services, research, and coordination of local-level activities, could be shared with or delegated to the non-governmental sector.

77. The non-governmental sector should also focus on the promotion of institutional structures through capacity-building, including workers and infrastructure, in order to enable them to be active partners in the implementation of sustainable forest development.

(e) Establishment and/or consolidation of national coordination

78. Governments should consider establishing a national body responsible for intersectoral coordination relating to forest-sector activities. Such a body should involve the relevant national actors in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the programme, avoid duplication of programmes, ensure the consistency of national, provincial and local actions, and ensure the effective coordination of the international involvement in the sector.

79. In addition, the coordination mechanism could function as an instrument to reflect the commitments between the national and international levels by promoting transparent dialogue between the actors.

2. Investment programming

80. Investment for the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests needs both public and private funds and requires long-term commitment.

(a) Strategic planning and investments

81. The development of strategies for the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests includes the identification of a wide range of funding sources, both public and private, domestic and foreign. The strategies can draw upon the principles outlined in the statement of the Expert Meeting on Financial Mechanisms (see para. 5) and the Panel's discussions under the relevant item. Countries could be invited to share their experiences on the schemes of forest-related economic indicators to promote investment and improved resource valuation and revenue collection. This procedure would lead to the identification of the most appropriate funding sources.

(b) Domestic public funding

82. Considering the importance of domestic funding, public budget allocation should reflect the national priority given to the conservation, management and sustainable development of forests. This can be achieved by securing appropriate valuation of forest resources, including payments for the ecological services of forests and the incorporation of externalities. An efficient revenue system is fundamental and should ensure that a sufficient part of forest revenues are reinvested into the forest sector. Public funding should create an environment that promotes investments in every step of the value chain (from forest development to primary and secondary processing and distribution) in order to retain added value from forest resources in the countries.

(c) Private funding

83. Macroeconomic stability, proper policy and regulatory frameworks and an established land-tenure system can attract responsible private investment. Forest strategies should identify and provide information on opportunities for private-sector investment. Appropriate incentives might include covering transaction costs, offsetting market development risks, compensation for the incorporation of externalities, guarantee schemes etc. Through market-based instruments, sustainable practices benefiting the poor and providing alternatives for them should be rewarded, and unsustainable practices discouraged.

(d) New and additional financial resources

84. The potential of mechanisms generating new and additional financial resources should be fully explored, so as to integrate the resources into comprehensive national programmes.

(e) Official development assistance

85. Official development assistance should be used in a complementary way to supplement national public funding, providing substantial support, in particular

for capacity-building, technology transfer and catalysing other sources of financing.

3. National capacity-building

86. Before embarking on a capacity-building programme, countries should assess their existing capabilities at all levels to prepare, implement and monitor the conservation, management and sustainable development of their forests. Priorities for strengthening existing institutions or building new institutions or infrastructure should be based on the assessment. It should be iterative (periodically repeated and updated) and participatory (involving key local, national and international actors). In addition, gender issues should be considered in all capacity-building programmes.

(a) Human resource development

87. The development of human resources should focus specifically on the following issues: reorienting and/or strengthening of existing training institutions taking a multidisciplinary approach; establishing new research, development and training institutions only where deficiencies exist; establishing systems for the assessment of the labour force and training needs; reviewing the curricula of training institutions according to the results of the needs assessment; reallocating the labour force according to optimal deployment.

88. In addition, national Governments should put in place an appropriate remuneration, welfare and incentive system in order to retain manpower and improve efficiency.

(b) Strengthening local institutions and organizations

89. More capacity-building should be directed to local levels, focusing on assessing existing (local) knowledge to improve its utilization, the developing mechanisms for the optimal use of existing institutions and organizations at local levels, facilitating the formal and informal capacity-building activities of local institutions, non-governmental organizations and community groups through a decentralized approach, and developing and intensifying retraining systems for civil servants and others working at the local level, to promote interaction with the local actors.

(c) Institutional development

90. The focus of institutional development should be on the establishment of administrative and accountability systems, including financial management systems, that emphasize participatory management.

91. Institutions related to research, extension and forest administration often need to be strengthened, taking a cross-sectoral approach and promoting networking through North/South as well as South/South cooperation and information exchange. Training in policy research, conflict resolution and mediation techniques should be enhanced and incorporated in the curricula.

(d) Development of improved approaches to external assistance

92. Harmonization and coordination in donor programmes is often lacking, and the lack usually leads to the creation of parallel organizations and the irrational use of funds and labour.

93. The development of improved approaches should focus specifically on establishing long-term donor commitments to assist in capacity-building, based on a national interinstitutional mechanism for monitoring changes in the forestry sector, and respect for the national priorities and use of national/local expertise, when possible,

4. International cooperation

(a) Regional level

94. Countries enjoy significant advantages when they take coordinated regional positions in international forums and use regional mechanisms to support national processes. In both cases regional action must derive from each country's assessment of its needs and the ability of the region to act effectively in its support. This means that regional approaches should not be developed in a political vacuum or imposed by external institutions. The point of departure should always be national requirements.

95. It is suggested that regional approaches would be most effective in the following initiatives: development of scientific and technical institutions to take advantage of economies of scale, the exchange of experiences and technology on the policies, strategies and actions related to the implementation of national forest programmes, the establishment of transboundary programmes involving the pooling of national efforts to tackle common concerns, as a forum for resolving other practical problems of the region, and participation in international forums and processes, where national positions shared by countries can be presented in a coordinated way.

(b) Global level

96. Considering the increased complexity of forest issues and the interactions between countries (trade, climate change, biodiversity conservation, evolution of human settlements), a permanent international dialogue should be maintained. In addition national forest programmes, which are considered to be appropriate tools for achieving the conservation, management and sustainable development of all kinds of forests, should be internationally promoted and supported.

(c) Promotion and improvement of the concept of national forest programmes

97. A reference document on national forest programmes should be finalized through a participatory process involving all interested parties (international organizations, national institutions and agencies, research institutes, non-governmental organizations, local people, representatives and the private sector). The document should be based on the existing basic principles and operational guidelines for national forest programmes (prepared by FAO in

March 1996) the results of Government-sponsored meeting (see paras. 5 and 6) and the results of discussions in the Panel.

98. The concept of national forest programmes should be considered as iterative and in permanent evolution in order to be fully efficient and adapted to changing economic, social and political situations. Regular consultations in appropriate forums should be organized for developing approaches to putting national forest programmes into operation; identifying the implication of changes in macroeconomic policies (structural adjustment programmes, liberalization and privatization of the economy, land allotment to the private sector etc.); addressing the interaction between forestry and agriculture development in the context of land-use systems and land evaluation; developing strategies for the involvement of local groups of users of the forest in its conservation, management and sustainable development and incorporating them into national forest programmes; transferring technology and streamlining financial mechanisms, using their respective advantages; and developing additional mechanisms for implementing national forest programmes, such as partnership agreements.

C. International consultations on forests

1. Establishment of a consultative body

99. A consultative body for international support for national forest programmes was approved, after considerable international negotiation, by the FAO Council in June 1993 but has not yet been convened. The body would cover specifically the promotion of an international dialogue in support for processes leading to national forest programmes. According full respect to national sovereignty, sustainable development objectives and the provisions of the Forest Principles, the consultative body could address problems by serving as a forum through which countries could raise their concerns and where interested parties could identify difficulties and suggest solutions in implementing national forest programmes and as a clearing-house for identification of critical problems being encountered; review progress and, based on available information and periodic reviews, assess the impact of national forest programmes on the implementation of the Forest Principles and the chapters of Agenda 21 relating to forests; encourage transparency and the dissemination of publicly available information on the results of national forest programmes, experiences and "best practice"; assess the adequacy of funding needs and sources, call the attention to funding needs and resources and, if those resources are judged inadequate, recommend feasible financial mechanisms to stimulate and augment the flow of international resources; promote international cooperation by: identifying overall priorities for international cooperation to promote, improve and implement national forest programmes; promoting awareness of experiences and lessons learned from different approaches, and promoting responses to requests from countries in need of attention/support on specific issues.

2. Other institutional options

100. The institutional option proposed by the experts at the Consultation on Implementing the Forest Principles (see para. 5), relates to programme element V.1. However, in view of its importance for the efficiency of national forest programmes, the Panel may also wish to consider it under programme element I.1. The experts proposed that a new forum for international consultation on forests should be established, based on the experience of the Panel. The forum, with an expanded mandate, might also be used for dealing with action on issues raised in other programme elements. It would promote international support for the national forest programme process. It should be a consultative body, whose work is supported by technical and scientific advice. It should establish collaborative leadership but not seek to coordinate national processes. It should ensure that all actors, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, are integrated into the process.

Notes

1/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), resolution 1, annex II.

2/ Ibid., annex III.

3/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 12 (E/1995/32).

4/ Ibid., chap. II, sect. D (5), annex I, chap. III (I), para. 1.

5/ E/CN.17/IPF/1995/3, para. 18 (I.1).

6/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), resolution 1, annex II, chap. 11, para. 11.12 (a).

7/ Ibid., para. 11.3 (c).